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Message Text

SECRET

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62
ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W
---------- 128262
R 221636Z MAY 74
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3470

S E C R E T ATHENS 3070

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, GR
SUBJECT: ARCHBISHOP SERAPHIM/AMBASSADOR TASCA: OUTLOOK FOR REGIME

REF: ATHENS 2805

1. AT HIS LUNCHEON MAY 21 ARCHBISHOP SERAPHIM RETURNED TO THE THEME OF FORWARD POLITICAL MOTION, FIRST BROACHED BY ME MAY 9 (REFTEL). ARCHBISHOP SAID HE COULD SAY AUTHORITATIVELY THAT THE REGIME IS DEDICATED TO POLITICAL CHANGE AND THAT ITS AIM IS TO RESTORE NORMAL POLITICAL RULE. HE REPEATED THIS PROMISE FOUR OR FIVE TIMES DURING THE COURSE OF OUR MEAL, READING FROM NOTES HE HAD PREPARED ON THE BASIS OF CONTACTS WITH HIS FRIENDS, PRESUMABLY GENERALS GHIZIKIS AND IOANNIDES, IN GOG. NOTWITH-STANDING HIS POSITIVE PROMISES, ARCHBISHOP ENTERED FAMILIAR CAVEATS: JUNTA LEADERS HAVE REACHED NO DECISION ON TIMING AND INITIATIVE FOR CHANGE MUST COME FROM WITHIN MILITARY RATHER THAN OUTSIDE.

2. SERAPHIM, AS DURING MY PREVIOUS CONVERSATION WITH HIM, AGAIN SOLICITED MY FRANK OPINION OF PRIME MINISTER ANDROUTSOPOULOS. HIS QUESTION PRESUMABLY REFLECTED WIDESPREAD OPINION IN ALL GREEK CIRCLES THAT ANDROUTSOPOULOS INEFFECTIVE AS PRIME MINISTER. I REPLIED SOMEWHAT ENIGMATICALLY THAT IN SITUATIONS OF THIS KIND WE COULD ONLY HOPE THAT THE GOOD LORD WOULD INSPIRE LEADERSHIP TO TAKE THE RIGHT STEPS TO PROMOTE THE WELFARE OF THEIR PEOPLE. I ADDED THAT THE IMPORTANT THING FOR GREECE'S FUTURE IS THAT THE GOG NOT CONTINUE TO NEGLECT THE SOUND POLITICAL TALENT THAT
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REMAINS UNUSED IN THE COUNTRY AND THAT IT NOT FAIL TO PROVIDE A

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POSITIVE FRAMEWORK CAPABLE OF ATTRACTING GOOD AND YOUNGER LEADERS. WITH THE PROSPECT LOOMING OF GREECE POSSIBLY STUMBLING TOWARD BOTH A FOREGIN POLICY CRISIS WITH TURKEY AND AN ECONOMIC CRISIS AT HOME, FRIENDS OF GREECE, I NOTED, COULD ONLY BE DEEPLY ANXIOUS FOR LEADERSHIP AT THE HELM TO BE THE BEST, BOTH FOR THE SAKE OF THE COUNTRY AND FOR THE REPUTATION OF ITS ARMED FORCES WHICH HAVE NOW ASSUMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR OVERALL POLICY. I INDICATED THAT FAILURE TO INVOLVE THE GREEK PEOPLE IN THE GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE DISASTROUS RESULTS. THE RIFT BETWEEN THE GREEK PEOPLE AND THE ARMY MUST BE HEALED SINCE OTHERWISE THE ARMED FORCES WOULD BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY FAILURES OR ERRORS OF THE GOVERNMENT. IN THIS CONTEXT, I EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT PRIME MINISTER ANDROUTSOPOULOS COULD DO BETTER.
TASCA

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, RELIGIOUS LEADERS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 MAY 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GarlanWA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974ATHENS03070
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740128-0316
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740528/aaaaayqb.tel
Line Count: 75
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: ATHENS 2805
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GarlanWA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 MAY 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 MAY 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <28 FEB 2003 by GarlanWA>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ARCHBISHOP SERAPHIM/AMBASSADOR TASCA: OUTLOOK FOR REGIME
TAGS: PINT, GR, (TASCA, HENRY J), (ANDROUTSOPOULOS, ADAMANTIOS), (SERAPHIM)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

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